

*SERICOMYIA SILENTIS* (HARRIS) (DIPTERA:  
SYRPHIDAE): THE 44, 834th. HOVERFLY

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I have been operating a Malaise trap from 1 April to 31 October since 1972 in my suburban garden in Leicester and identifying and tabulating all hoverflies captured. This year, the sixteenth of the study, looked like being a poor year for hoverflies, the cumulative 1987 total for the week ending 9 August being the second lowest yet for comparable dates. (Records are kept on a weekly basis, the end of a week being taken as Sunday.)

However, hoverfly numbers in the garden increased dramatically on Friday 14 August, and so on 15 and 16 August the Malaise trap catch was scored hourly. Between 1100 and 1200 hours on 15 August, a male *Sericomyia silentis* entered the trap. My previous encounters with this impressive hoverfly had been amongst samples collected on Shetland and South Uist, and it was a totally unexpected capture in a suburban garden in the Midlands. Although there are three previous Leicestershire records (Owen 1979), Stubbs and Falk (1983), while acknowledging that it is widespread, state that 'boggy heaths, acid wet meadows or woodland clearings. . . provide typical habitat'.

Up to 1100 hours on 15 August 1987, an overall total of 44,806 hoverflies of 90 species had been captured by the Malaise trap. In the hour 1100 to 1200, 56 were caught, among them the specimen of *S. silentis*. It is possible, therefore, to place this capture at between the 44,807th. and the 44,862nd., and I have simply assumed it came mid-way. I can reasonably conclude that *S. silentis* is rare at this site, although, of course, I shall have to wait for the second capture to know just how rare.

Malaise trapping confirmed the impression of an increase in hoverfly numbers in the garden during the second week of August, the cumulative total for the week ending 16 August (1152) being nearly three times that for the week ending 9 August (466). Only in 1977 did the cumulative total more than double over the comparable week. 1977 was a year of massive influx of *Episyrphus balteatus* to the garden (Owen 1981), and in the current year, too, the increase in numbers was in large part caused by numbers of *E. balteatus*, 429 having been caught in the week 9-16 August. The unprecedented numbers (1143) of *E. balteatus* in 1977 were mostly captured in the week ending 14 August and in the three following weeks.

In this year too, numbers of *E. balteatus* trapped remained high relative to other species, 227 having been caught in the week ending

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23 August and 119 in the week ending 30 August. Thereafter, numbers of all species declined. By the week ending 18 October, the 1987 cumulative total was 2867, including 831 *E. balteatus*, making it the eighth best year for hoverflies, only average, but by no means the disastrous year that it appeared to be up to the beginning of August.

### Reference

- Owen, J. 1979. Hoverflies (Diptera: Syrphidae) of Leicestershire: an annotated checklist. *Trans. Leicester Lit. and Phil. Soc.* **73**: 13-31.
- Owen, J. 1981. Trophic variety and abundance of hoverflies (Diptera, Syrphidae) in an English suburban garden. *Holarctic Ecology* **4**: 221-228.
- Stubbs, A. and S. Falk 1983. *British hoverflies: an illustrated identification guide*. British Entomological & Natural History Society.

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## Notes and Observations

HYPENA OBSITALIS HBN. (LEP.: NOCTUIDAE), THE BLOXWORTH SNOUT, IN CORNWALL — On the morning of 8th November 1987 I disturbed a small moth that was resting near my back door. Its flight was slow and "plume-like", and the patterned wings and noticable palps clearly suggested an unusual snout. On capture it proved to be a male *obsitalis*, probably around the tenth British specimen outside of the Channel Islands, where it is resident. Running an m.v. light subsequently drew a blank.

Readers may speculate on the suspense involved on seeing a rare moth, and knowing that one's net is in the boot of the car (locked), parked in the garage (also locked) ! F. H. SMITH, Turnstones, Perrancoombe, Perranporth, Cornwall.

THE EFFECT OF STORM DAMAGE ON CATOCALA SPECIES (LEP.: NOCTUIDAE) IN THE NEW FOREST — the effects of the great storm of 15th October on insect populations will take some time to assess. The New Forest area is famous as a locality for the *Catocala* species *sponsa* and *promissa*, insects which probably lay their overwintering eggs on the upper branches of oak trees.

I visited two principal sites on 5th November : Lady Cross has relatively little damage, with only one major oak down, although numerous branches have been torn from the trunks. The central area of Frame Heath has been devastated with several of the old "sugar" trees down and torn limbs and branches everywhere. How many *Catocala* larvae will fail to find food on hatching next year remains to be seen. E. H. WILD, 7 Abbots Close, Highcliffe, Dorset.